



Lu Shu-Chen, *My Baby*, 1997, ceramics cast, 45 x 26 x 17cm.

yi's *Characters* (1997), ten ceramic works, and Kwok Mang-ho's *Bamboo Frogs* (1997) are two works by artists for whom humor and a certain playfulness are an important aspect in their vision.

Tong King-sum, one of Hong Kong's most accomplished sculptors, has a way with wood. His sense of what is possible within the wood itself and what he can achieve in shaping it to his vision is that of an astute artist. His large work *Union* (1997) has a sense of still sensuality about it, the surface texture invites touch. At the same time, Tong shows his ability in successfully combining materials to highlight their strengths as in his beautiful wood and bronze work *Twin Enigma* (1997).

Marble is always a difficult material for a sculptor to read. Marble, unlike wood which is more easily manipulated, has a density and a complex grain that offers a different challenge in shaping the form the sculptor wishes to achieve. Lai Yat-fong's white marble work *Sinuous Form* (1996) suggests the intertwining of limbs or roots. He has clearly drawn the image from the marble, the balance between smooth and rough surface textures giving one the feeling of movement within a solid mass work.

Wu Man-wai's elegant black marble work *Shell IV* (1996), on the other hand, is a more open and more traditionally stylized piece than Lai's.

The black marble, with a few white veins running through it, stands tall, a combination of hard edge and smooth, curving surfaces to it. This work has an open sensuality to it than Lai's, the space within the work welcoming to the eye, inviting the viewer to touch.

Ian Findlay

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TAIWAN

Taipei

Lu Shu-Chen at Lung Men Art Gallery

The significance of animal sculpture has a long and complex cultural history, ancient and modern, including religious, philosophical, and as purely social and public decoration. The range of animals represented by sculptors has included everything from the symbolic and imaginary to jungle animals and horses and cattle. Animal sculpture as pets have also held a special place in our hearts. The range of animals that humankind has kept as pets is great indeed, but by far the most common are dogs and cats. It is the dog which is the subject of Taiwan sculptor Lu Shu-Chen's most recent show.

Lu Shu-Chen's dogs are of a timeless narrative, a tale of love and devotion. In this show entitled *Dogs of Mercy* the dogs

are predominately ceramic and bronze and modeled on her own pets. The works have been executed with immense love, and occasionally with a sentimentality that only a devoted dog lover could achieve. *My Baby* (1997) is one such work. The tiny, newly born pup is cupped gently in an exquisitely rendered pair of hands. Although it is a gentle rendering of an acutely sentimental moment, it is easy to sense the agony of birth and the struggle for life.

Whether alone, in pairs, or in groups the dogs are clearly the work of a mature artist who has a firm grasp of the narrative, technical, and aesthetic demands of animal sculpture. The surface textures and the forms achieved by Lu render the animals so appealing and life-like that one cannot help but touch them. In each piece, there is a sense of homeliness and security, with each animal clearly with a distinct character and charm. Their individual expressions and positions—as in *To Observe Quietly* (1997), *Poised* (1997), *Hope* (1997), and *I am A-Fu* (1997)—seem full of secrets and knowing.

This was a show as much about the art of sculpture as it was a display of great love for one of humankind's most enduring friends. At the same time, it was an artist's tribute to how loud the "voice" of silent love is in human and animal affairs.

Ian Findlay

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THE UNITED STATES

San Diego

Helen Escobedo and Collaborators at InSITE97

Milk at the L'Ubre Mooseum, a site-specific work shown at the international triennial known as *InSITE*, reflected on the manner in which culture defines even the simplest elements of life. One of over 42 projects featured in the interna-

tional site-specific exhibition that is presented in the border cities of San Diego (USA) and Tijuana (Mexico), the work addressed the divergent cultural interpretations of milk within the American and Mexican cultures. Spearheaded by the renowned Mexican artist Helen Escobedo, *Milk at the L'Ubre Mooseum* was a collaborative work done in conjunction with Alberto Caro-Limon, Armando Lavat, and Franco Mendez Calvillo, three artists from Tijuana. The exhibition space itself, a former milk-processing plant owned by the Carnation Corporation, certainly prompted the team's decision to focus on milk as a topic.

Showcased in three rooms on the second floor of the building, *Milk at the L'Ubre Mooseum* present first the sculpted effigy of an enormous, double-life-sized cow rendered in painted papier-mache. Viewable from behind a barred doorframe, this component of the installation established the culturally common subject of a cow and of cow's milk as the theme of the work. Across the hall, one entered a small and dimly lit room. Part of the former Carnation freezer rooms, this chamber wittily recontextualized Dan Flavin-esque white fluorescent tube sculptures into structures that suggested cooling chambers for milk. Also within this quiet chamber was a painted, alter-styled portrait of a cow named Santa Clara, shown crowned with a halo and honored with a row of actual glowing candles placed beneath the painting. With its subdued, honorific, and even sacred overtones, this room suggested the Mexican cultural interpretation of milk as a nourishing substance to be respected and even revered.

Passing through a heavy, freezer-like door one moved from the quiet chamber of Santa Clara-the-Cow to a sundrenched room filled with processed milk cartons, milk labels, and old-fashioned American milk cans. Here, an immense floor-to-ceiling wall, constructed of red, white, and blue milk cartons that cleverly parodied the colors of the American flag,

tellingly announced one's metaphoric passage into the United States. Along a second wall, logos identifying various types of commercially available American milk products humorously proliferated. These included the commercial logos for Designer Milk, Day-Glo Milk, Diet-Free Milk, Borderline Milk, Low-Fat Milk, Glamor Milk, McMillk, and even Odorless Milk, among others. Adjacent to this wall was a table displaying dried, powdered and packaged Carnation Milk products such as Hot Cocoa Mix and Coffeemate. Parodying the commercialization of a natural product that has come to characterize American attitudes and interpretations of milk, this final installation room underscored American concepts of milk.

Humorous, while extremely pointed and trenchant, *Milk at the L'Ubre Mooseum* explored cultural differences of attitude and interpretation that exist within the North-South cultural spheres, in relation to as common and ordinary a substance as milk. Presenting two radically different cultural interpretations of the same substance, this exhibition underscored, too, the significance of

culture in the formulation of attitudes, emphases, ideas, and, of course, art. Within the context of *InSITE*, with its subliminal focus on international relations, this vigilant work cautioned viewers of the shifting axes of cultural difference, where concepts and interpretations that appear certain in one context are dissolved and transfigured within another.

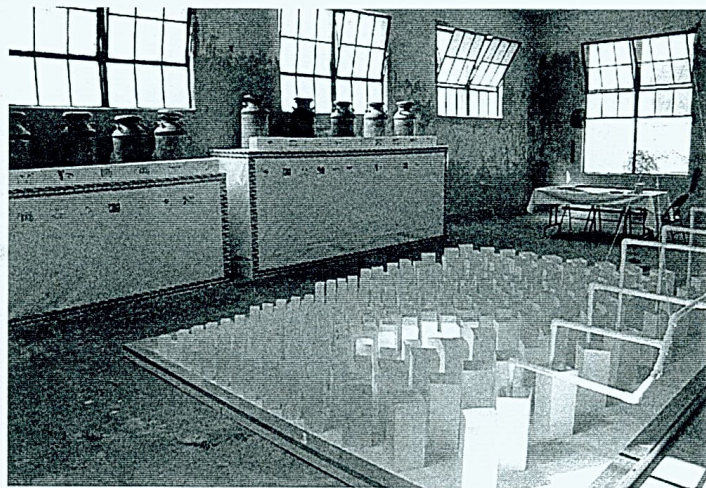
Collette Chattopadhyay

VIETNAM

Ho Chi Minh City

Nguyen Trong Loc and Tram Chi Ly at Blue Space Gallery

Soil's Soul (*Hon Cua Dat*) was a collaborative project between two young Vietnamese artists Nguyen Trong Loc and Tram Chi Ly. The show was unusual for the similarity in approach between their work. Indeed, it often seemed to be a seamless exhibition of the work of one artist. Both artists seem to have



Helen Escobedo, Alberto Caro-Limon, Armando Lavat & Franco Mendez Calvillo, *Milk at the L'Ubre Mooseum*, 1997, mixed media, installation view in room #3 of 3 at the Reincarnation Project, *InSITE97*, San Diego, California. Photograph: Courtesy of Shubroto Chattopadhyay.

consciously chosen to use a similar selection of materials—wood in a variety of forms, ceramic, twine, and bamboo. The presentation as well of the artist's wall pieces was the same, as was the display of free-standing sculptural pieces.

There are, however, quite distinct differences between their work. Tram Chi Ly takes a more muscular tack, as is demonstrated by the three large works of his that dominated the center of the gallery space. Towering over the viewer *Clay Lamp with Sunspot* (*Dem Dat Voi Nhung Tia Mat Troi*) is a rough-hewn column made of three tree limbs (still with bark) tied together to create a hollow space in the center. Like the wall pieces, gravity plays an important role. Elsewhere ceramic shards are strung together and dangle through the core of the column.

On the wall, Ly's *Ancient Works* (*Mat To Co*) stands out in its neat symmetry and gracious proportions. In the side gallery *Regional Vietnam* immediately attracts the eye with two rectangular wood panels covered with hundreds of shell buttons. This work shimmers with an active presence which contrasts with the meditative quality of most of the other works in the show.

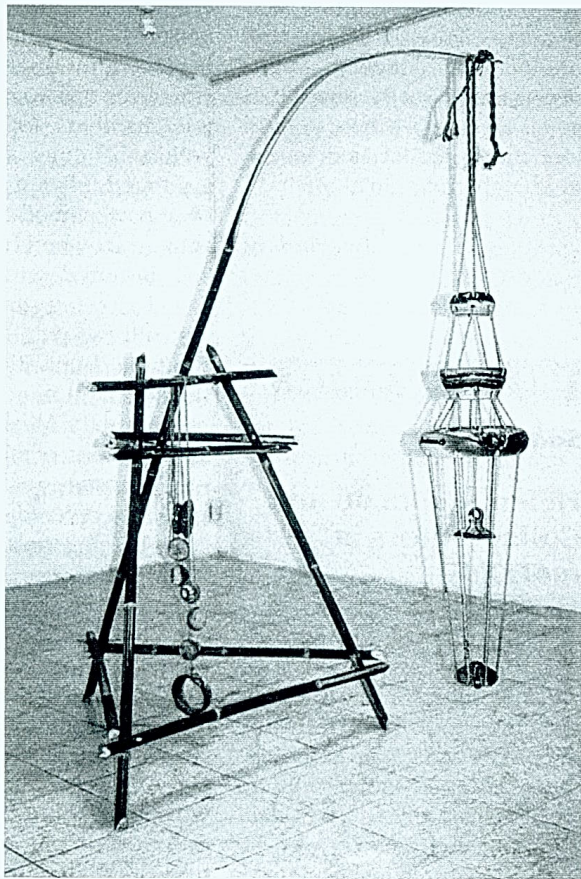
Nguyen Trong Loc's work has a more lyrical feel to it than Ly's. A close examination, however, reveals, a complement to Ly's strength, Loc's sensitivity. Loc uses the simplicity of the singular line in many of his

works and seems more concerned with the idea of weight than mass. Perhaps the piece that best embodies Loc's style is *Fruit of First Season* (*Hoa Qua Dau Mua*). Elegant and inviting, the artist uses two arching bamboo lines with small stones attached to the ends to reach out towards the viewer. In this artwork the artist is able to couple whimsy with confidence that results in a visual statement that seems to float off the wall.

Other noteworthy pieces include a modest biomorphic floor sculpture *Dreaming* (*Giac Mo*) that was reminiscent of a grasshopper or preying mantis. When Loc pairs lacquerware wood panels with his hanging apparatus, it results in a more substantial statement than the other more sparse pieces. *Forest God* (*Than Rung*) is an enigmatic work that has a disjointed skeleton in the central diamond-shaped panel. As in much of the other work in this exhibition it hints at ritual ceremony.

Viewing *Soil's Soul* from an anthropological point of view, these galleries are filled with the stuff of seers and prophets. This art is rife with coded symbols and inferred meanings. Walking through the exhibition it almost felt as if one had happened upon some secret gathering. The participants and conjuring shamans had departed, leaving their handiwork for us to discover and decipher.

Bradford Edwards



Nguyen Trong Loc, *Forest God* (*Than Rung*), 1997, mixed media, dimensions variable.